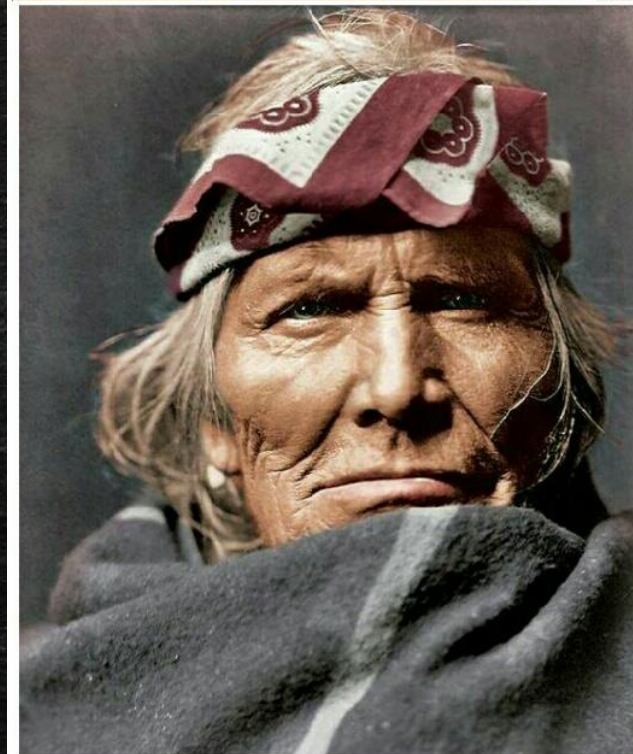
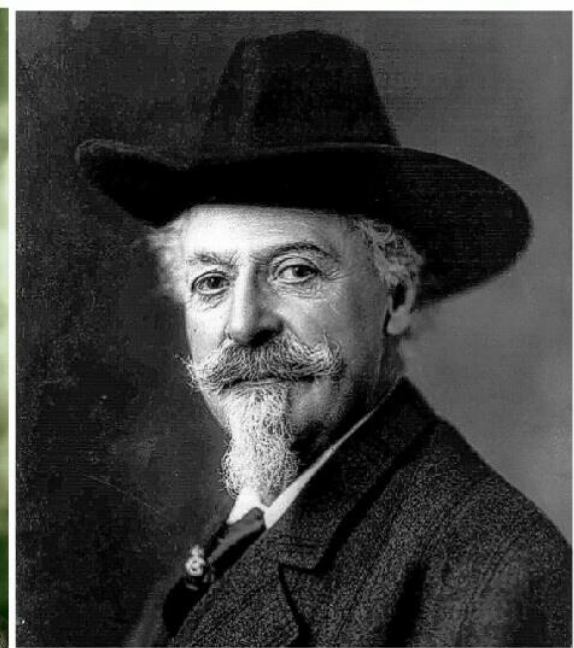
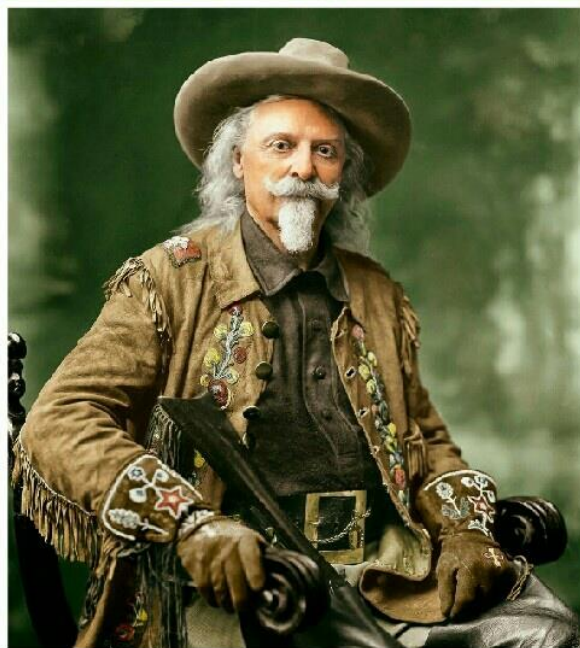
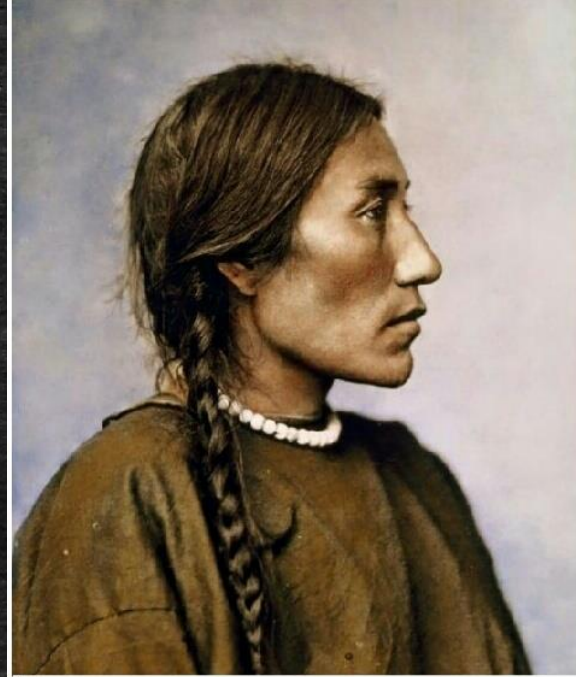


Buffalo Bill Show



Wild West shows were traveling vaudeville performances in the United States and Europe that existed around 1870–1920. The shows began as theatrical stage productions and evolved into open-air shows that depicted the cowboys, Native American Indians, army scouts, outlaws, and wild animals that existed in the American West. The shows introduced many western performers and personalities, and romanticized the American frontier to a wide audience.





Wild West shows - History

In the 19th century, following the American Civil War, stories and inexpensive dime novels depicting the American West and frontier life were becoming common. In 1869, author Ned Buntline wrote a novel about the buffalo hunter, U.S. Army scout and guide William F. Buffalo Bill Cody called Buffalo Bill, the King of Border Men after the two met on a train from California to Nebraska. In December 1872, Buntline's novel turned into a theatrical production when The Scouts of the Prairie debuted in Chicago. The show featured Buntline, Cody, Texas Jack Omohundro, and the Italian-born ballerina Giuseppina Morlacchi and toured the American theater circuit for two years.



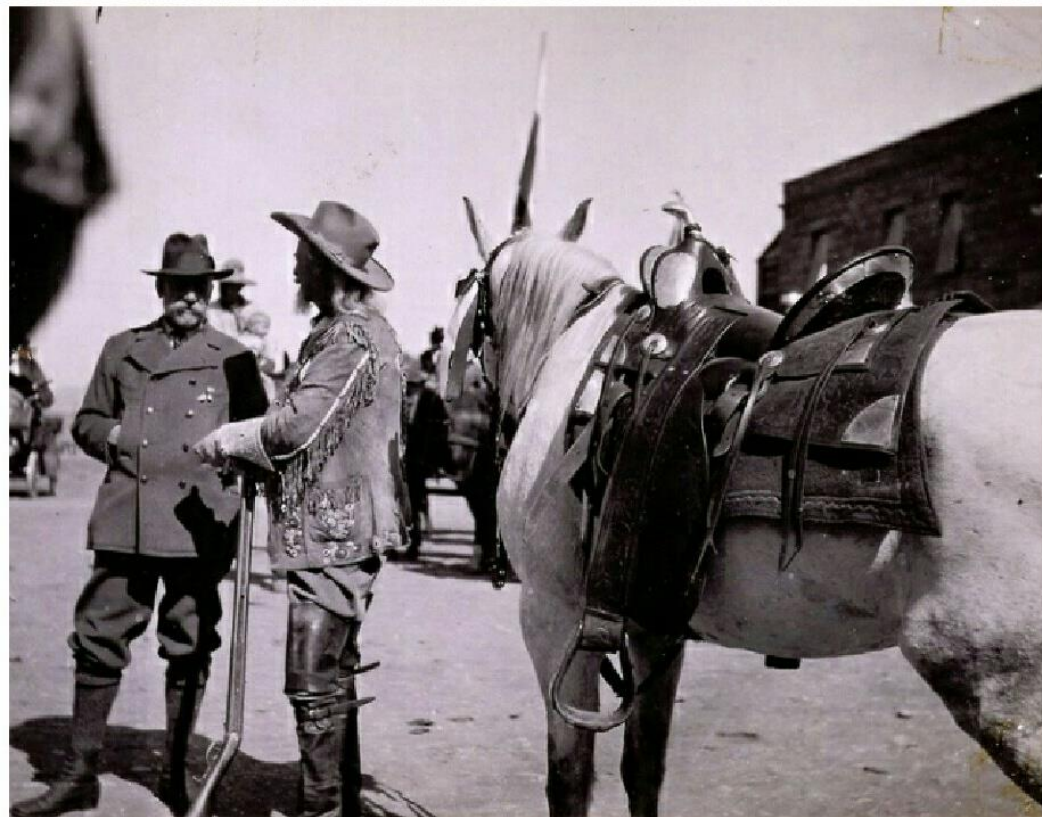
History 2

Buntline left the show and in 1874 Cody founded the Buffalo Bill Combination, in which he performed for part of the year, while scouting on the prairies the rest of the year. Wild Bill Hickok joined the group to headline in a new play called Scouts of the Plains. Hickok did not enjoy acting and was released from the group after one show when he shot out a spotlight that focused on him.

Texas Jack parted ways with Cody, and in 1877 and formed his own acting troupe in St. Louis, known as the 'Texas Jack Combination' and in May of that year he debuted Texas Jack in the Black Hills. Other plays the combination performed included The Trappers Daughter and Life on the Border.

History 3

In 1883, Cody founded Buffalo Bill's Wild West, an outdoor attraction that toured annually. The new show contained a lot of action including wild animals, trick performances, theatrical reenactments, and all sorts of characters from the frontier were all incorporated into the show's program. Shooting exhibitions were also in the line up with extensive shooting displays and trick shots. Rodeo events, involving rough and dangerous activities performed by cowboys with different animals. It was the first and prototypical Wild West show lasting until 1915 and featured theatrical reenactments of battle scenes, characteristic western scenes, and even hunts.



Buffalo Bill and prince
Albert



Re-enactment of Custer's Last Stand. c.1905

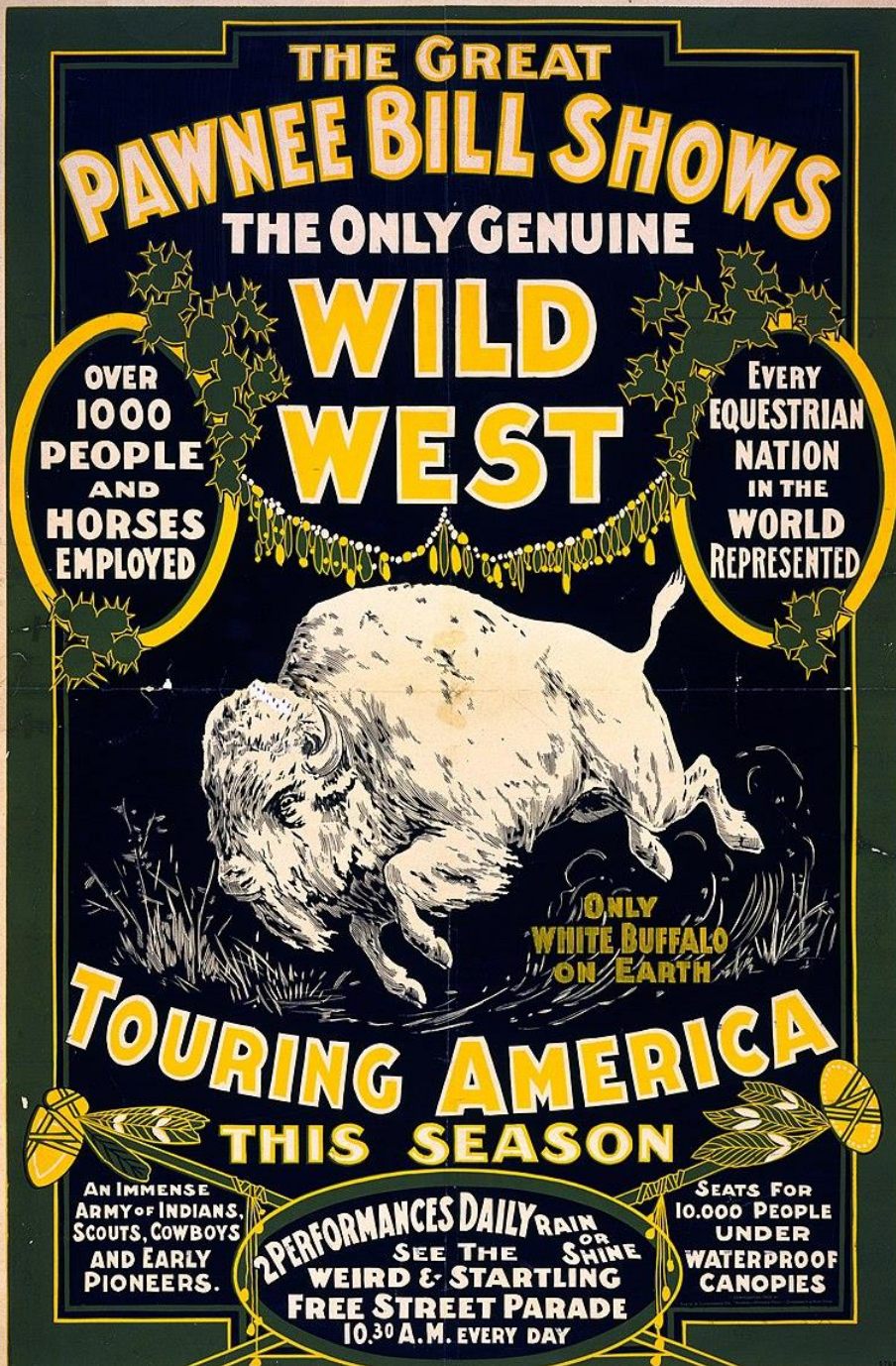


Buffalo Bill's Wild West

In 1883, Buffalo Bill's Wild West was founded in North Platte, Nebraska when Buffalo Bill Cody turned his real life adventure into the first outdoor western show. The show's publicist Arizona John Burke employed innovating techniques at the time, such as celebrity endorsements, press kits, publicity stunts, op-ed articles, billboards and product licensing, that contributed to the success and popularity of the show. Buffalo Bill's Wild West toured Europe eight times, the first four tours between 1887 and 1892, and the last four from 1902 to 1906. The first tour was in 1887 as part of the American Exhibition, which coincided with the Golden Jubilee of Queen Victoria. The Prince of Wales, later King Edward VII, requested a private preview of the Wild West performance; he was impressed enough to arrange a command performance for Queen Victoria. The Queen enjoyed the show and meeting the performers, setting the stage for another command performance on June 20, 1887, for her Jubilee guests. Royalty from all over Europe attended, including the future Kaiser Wilhelm II and the future King George V. Buffalo Bill's Wild West closed its successful London run in October 1887 after more than 300 performances, with more than 2.5 million tickets sold. The tour made stops in Birmingham and Manchester before returning to the United States in May 1888 for a short summer tour.

Crue





Poster for The Great Pawnee Bill Shows, 1903.

Buffalo Bill's Wild West 2

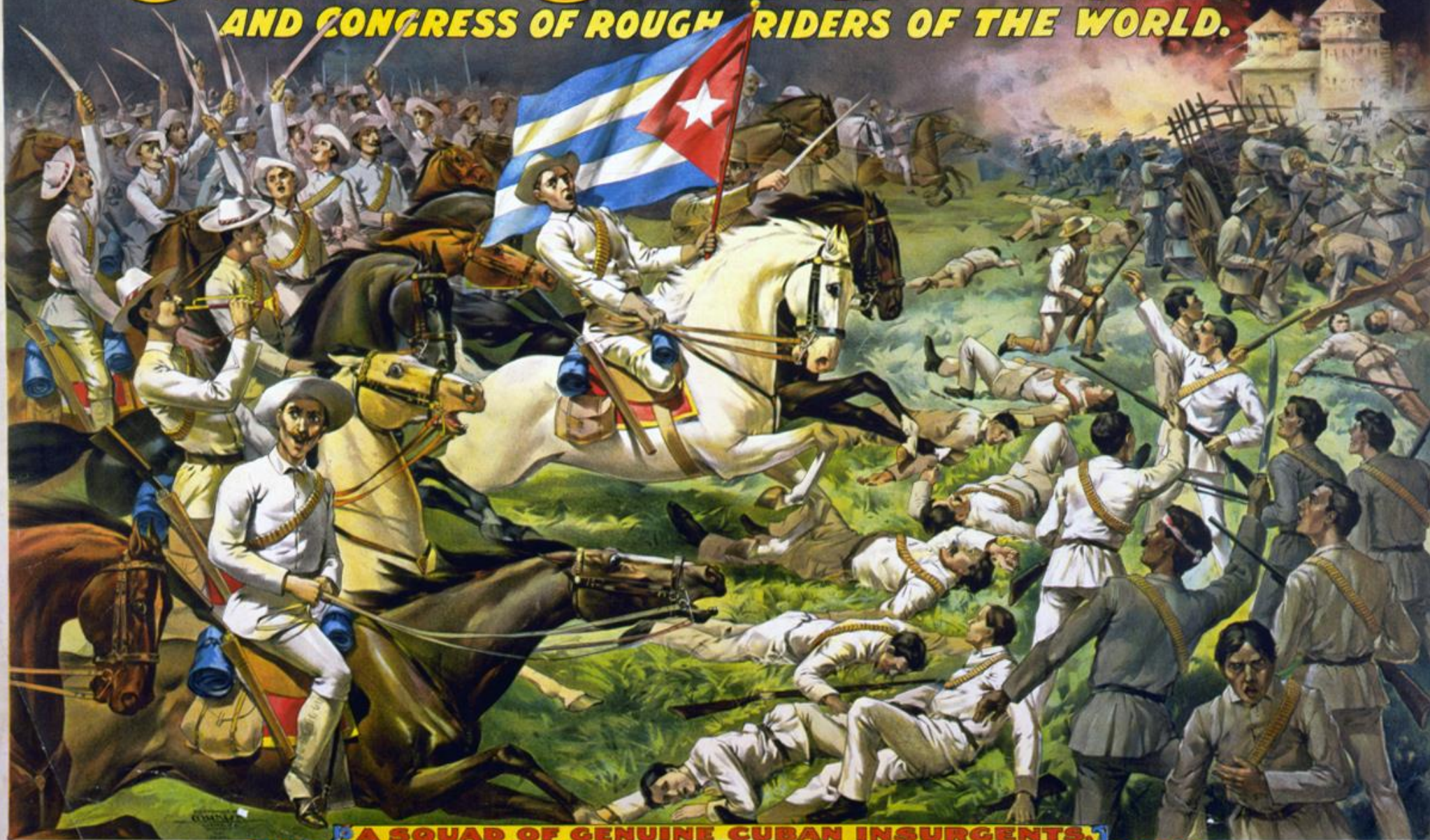
In 1893, Cody changed the title to Buffalo Bill's Wild West and Congress of Rough Riders of the World and the show performed at the Chicago World's Fair to a crowd of 18,000. This performance was a huge contributor to the show's popularity. The show never again did as well as it did that year. That same year at the Fair, Frederick Turner, a young Wisconsin scholar, gave a speech that pronounced the first stage of American history over. "The frontier has gone", he declared.

Sitting Bull and Buffalo Bill, 1885

Buffalo Bill's Wild West returned to Europe in December 1902 with a fourteen-week run in London, capped by a visit from King Edward VII and the future King George V. The Wild West traveled throughout Great Britain in a tour in 1902 and 1903 and a tour in 1904, performing in nearly every city large enough to support it. The 1905 tour began in April with a two-month run in Paris, after which the show traveled around France, performing mostly one-night stands, concluding in December. The final tour, in 1906, began in France on March 4 and quickly moved to Italy for two months. The show then traveled east, performing in Austria, the Balkans, Hungary, Romania, and the Ukraine, before returning west to tour in Poland, Bohemia (later Czech Republic), Germany, and Belgium

BUFFALO BILL'S WILD WEST

AND CONGRESS OF ROUGH RIDERS OF THE WORLD.



A SQUAD OF GENUINE CUBAN INSURGENTS.
BATTLE SCARRED HEROES FROM THE FIELD OF ACTION

Poster showing
Buffalo Bill's Wild
West and Congress
of Rough Riders of
the World battling
Cuban insurgents,
c. 1898.

Buffalo Bill's Wild West 3

By 1894 the harsh economy made it hard to afford tickets. It did not help that the show was routed to go through the South in a year when the cotton was flooded and there was a general depression in the area. Buffalo Bill lost a lot of money and was on the brink of a financial disaster. Soon after, and in an attempt of recovery of monetary balance, Buffalo Bill signed a contract in which he was tricked by Bonfil and Temmen into selling them the show and demoting himself to a mere employee and attraction of the Sells-Floto Circus. From this point, the show began to destroy itself. Finally, in 1913 the show was declared bankrupt.

BUFFALO BILL'S WILD WEST

AND CONGRESS OF ROUGH RIDERS OF THE WORLD.



A COMPANY OF WILD WEST COWBOYS, THE REAL ROUGH RIDERS OF THE WORLD WHOSE DARING EXPLOITS HAVE MADE THEIR VERY NAMES SYNONYMOUS WITH DEEDS OF BRAVERY.

Buffalo Bill's Wild West and Congress of Rough Riders of the World - Poster showing cowboys rounding up cattle and portrait of Col. W.F. Cody on horseback. c.1899.

Show content

The shows consisted of reenactments of history combined with displays of showmanship, sharp-shooting, hunts, racing, or rodeo style events. Each show was 3–4 hours long and attracted crowds of thousands of people daily. The show began with a parade on horseback. The parade was a major ordeal, an affair that involved huge public crowds and many performers, including the Congress of Rough Riders.

Events included acts known as Bison Hunt, Train Robbery, Indian War Battle Reenactment, and the usual grand finale of the show, Attack on the Burning Cabin, in which Indians attacked a settler's cabin and were repulsed by Buffalo Bill, cowboys, and Mexicans. Also included were historical scenes such as the Battle of the Little Bighorn or the charge on San Juan Hill. The reenactment of the Battle of Little Bighorn also known as "Custer's Last Stand" featured Buck Taylor starring as General George Armstrong Custer. In this battle, Custer and all men under his direct command were killed. After Custer is dead, Buffalo Bill rides in, the hero, but he is too late. He avenges Custer by killing and scalping Yellow Hair (also called Yellowhand) which he called the "first scalp for Custer".

Sitting Bull and Buffalo Bill, 1885



Show content 2

Shooting competitions and displays of marksmanship were commonly a part of the program. Great feats of skill were shown off using rifles, shot guns, and revolvers. Most people in the show were all good marksmen but many were experts.

Animals also did their share in the show through rodeo entertainment. In rodeo events, cowboys like Lee Martin would try to rope and ride broncos. Broncos are unbroken horses that tend to throw or buck their riders. Other wild animals they would attempt to ride or deal with were mules, buffalo, Texas steers, elk, deer, bears, and moose. The show also demonstrated hunts which were staged as they would have been on the frontier, and were accompanied by one of the few remaining buffalo herds in the worlds. Races were another form of entertainment employed in the Wild West show. Many different races were held, including those between cowboys, Mexicans, and Indians, a 100 yd foot race between Indian and Indian pony, a race between Sioux boys on bareback Indian ponies, races between Mexican thoroughbreds, and even a race between Lady Riders.

Performers

Wild West shows contained as many as 1,200 performers at one time (cowboys, scouts, Indians, military, Mexicans, and men from other heritages), and a large number of many animals including buffalo and Texas Longhorns. Some of the recognizably famous men who took part in the show were Will Rogers, Tom Mix, Pawnee Bill, James Lawson, Bill Pickett, Jess Willard, Mexican Joe, Capt. Adam Bogardus, Buck Taylor, Ralph and Nan Lohse, Antonio Esquibel, Capt. Waterman and his Trained Buffalo, and Johnny Baker. Johnny Baker was nicknamed the "Cowboy Kid" and considered to be Annie Oakley's boy counterpart. Some notable cowboys who participated in the events were Buck Taylor (dubbed "The First Cowboy King"), Bronco Bill, James Lawson ("The Roper"), Bill Bullock, Tim Clayton, Coyote Bill, and Bridle Bill.

Performers 2

Women were also a large part of Wild West shows and attracted many spectators. One such performer was Annie Oakley who first gained recognition as a sharpshooter when she defeated Frank Butler, a pro marksman at age 15, in a shooting exhibition. She became an attraction of Buffalo Bill's Wild West show for 16 years. Annie was billed in the show as "Miss Annie Oakley, the Peerless Lady Wing-Shot".

Calamity Jane was another distinguished woman performer. Calamity Jane was a notorious frontierswoman who was the subject of many wild stories- many of which she made up herself. In the show, she was a skilled horsewoman and expert rifle and revolver handler. Calamity Jane appeared in Wild West shows until 1902, when she was reportedly fired for drinking and fighting.

A large group of Native Americans mounted on horseback during a Wild West show at the Pan-American Exhibition, Buffalo, N.Y. c.1901

Other notable females in the business were Tillie Baldwin, May Lillie, Lucille Mulhall, Lillian Smith, Bessie and Della Ferrel, Luella-Forepaugh Fish, the Kemp Sisters, and Texas Rose as an announcer.

Native Americans

Native Americans were also a part of Wild West shows. They participated in staged "Indian Races" and historic battles, and often appeared in attack scenes attacking whites in which their savagery and wildness was played up. They also performed talented dances, such as the Sioux Ghost Dance. In reality the performance of the ghost dance meant that trouble was brewing and about to break out, but it wasn't portrayed as such in the show. Chief Sitting Bull joined Cody's Wild West show for a short time and was a star attraction alongside Annie Oakley. During his time at the show, Sitting Bull was introduced to President Grover Cleveland, which he thought proved his importance as chief. He was friends with Buffalo Bill and highly valued the horse that was given to him when he



Buffalo Bill Cody, Ned
Buntline, Texas Jack
Omohundro in The Scouts
of the Prairie, 1872.

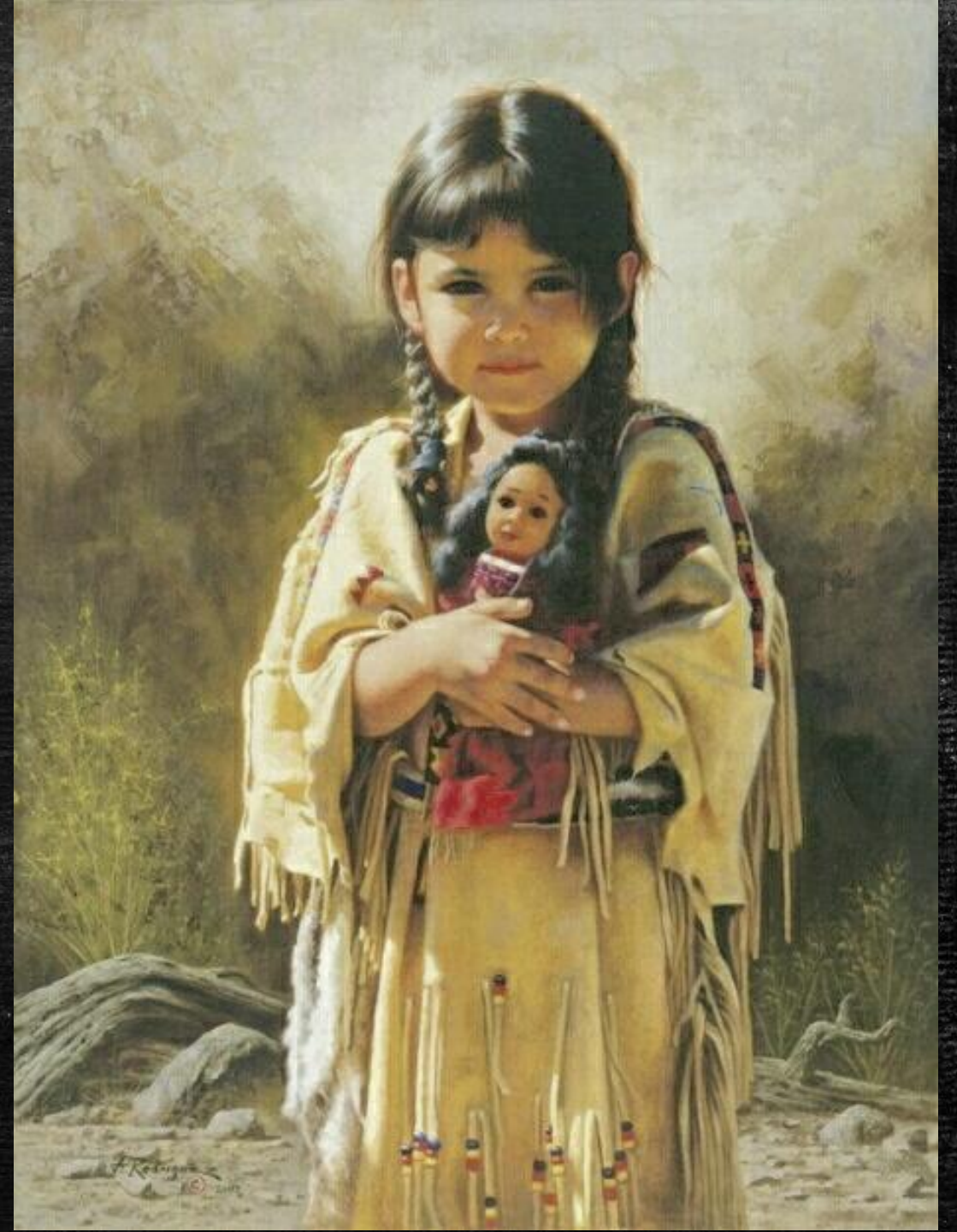
Buffalo Bill Ned Buntline Texas Jack.



A large group of Native Americans mounted on horseback during a Wild West show at the Pan-American Exhibition, Buffalo, N.Y. c.1901









c. 1898

Native Americans from
"Buffalo Bill's Wild West"

In 1898, photographer Gertrude Käsebier looked out of her studio window on Fifth Avenue in New York City and saw the cast of Buffalo Bill's Wild West parading past. Buffalo Bill, a.k.a. William Cody, was by that time a legendary figure of the American Old West, a legend he partially self-generated. Cody's nickname arrived when he supplied buffalo meat to workers on the Kansas Pacific railroad.

Iron White Man

Image: Library of Congress



Flying Hawk
Image: Library of Congress



Flying Hawk
Image: Library of Congress



Joe Black Fox
Image: Library of Congress



Whirling Horse
Image: Library of Congress

Joe Black Fox
Image: Library of Congress





Charging Thunder
Image: Library of Congress



American Horse and wife
Image: Library of Congress



Sammy Lone Bear
Image: Library of Congress



Holy Frog(?) (left) and Big Turnips(?)
Image: Library of Congress



White War Bonnet
Image: Library of Congress